

COINS

Saving those \$2 bills? Forget it

By Roger Boye

This week's column answers more questions about old coins and currency.

Q—For many years my husband saved all the \$2 bills that came his way. He says some of them may be quite valuable because they have either red or green serial numbers. Do you think we'd make a big profit by "selling out" to a coin dealer?—A.T., Elmhurst.

A—Probably not; most novices greatly overestimate the "collector value" of their \$2 bills.

For example, series 1976 \$2 bills with green serial numbers have no special value to hobbyists, and \$2 bills of the various 1953 or 1963 series [red serial numbers] must be in "crisp, uncirculated condition" or nearly so to command even a modest collector premium.

Some deuce-notes with red serial numbers are rare, of course, including the series 1928-A [retail value \$40 in "very fine condition"] and 1929-B [\$150 in "very fine"]. The prices are high because Uncle Sam printed relatively few of those bills.

In your self-addressed, stamped envelope, I'll send you a price list to use in evaluating all types of U.S. paper money printed since 1928. But don't get your hopes up; the prized keepsakes

rarely surface in family hoards.

Q—We own several old bills with serial numbers in different colors, such as blue, red or green. Do the colors have any significance?—J.E., Chicago.

A—Yes. Most silver certificates printed since 1928 have blue serial numbers and Treasury seal. The government used red ink on United States notes, gold on gold certificates, brown on national currency and green on Federal Reserve notes. Only Federal Reserve notes are made today.

Q—I'd like to know how I could stop my proof coins from tarnishing. Also, why do they tarnish?—G.C., Chicago.

A—Coins tarnish when the metal comes in contact with the elements and gradually begins to oxidize. Tiny droplets of moisture can start the process; so avoid touching proof coins or even breathing on them.

Many experts advise placing proofs in airtight, inert containers made of hard plastic. The storage area should be dry and free of fumes.

Proof coins sold by the U.S. Mint in recent years are sealed in clear plastic holders that most collectors find adequate for long-term storage.

● At least 10 dealers will sell old coins from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. next Sunday at the annual show of the Mundelein Coin Club. The bourse room will be in the Holiday Inn near the intersection of U.S. Hwy. 45 and Ill. Hwy. 83 in Mundelein.

Other dealers will set up shop the same day at the Schaumburg Numismatic Society's annual show. Hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Holiday Inn, 3405 Algonquin Rd., Rolling Meadows.

Admission is free at both shows.